

RECEIVED BY SENATOR GORDON ALLOTT, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, GRAND JUNCTION, COLO., JUNE 10, 1960

I am particularly pleased to be here today, a part of the state where I have always been made to feel most welcome and speaking to a group of which I am both a member and an admirer. And, I might add, that my admiration for this group reached its peak at that time when we were all embarked in an all-out effort to retain the fine Veterans' facility here in Grand Junction. Your contribution to that effort was, in no small measure, directly responsible for the ultimate decision of the order to close the hospital and that facility now stands, operates, and grows as a memorial to the dedication of all and all the other Veterans organizations in this great state. I know how much it helps me because I was right in the thick of that fight myself, and I salute and thank you for all the assistance you gave me. The word "credible," as defined, by Webster, "worthy of belief . . . reliable." Now let me ask you a question. How much information are you, as citizens, getting out of Grand Junction today . . . on Viet Nam or any other critical issue . . . that is credible, or "worthy of belief." Or, worse yet, how can we tell . . . in light of recent statements of ranking officials . . . just what you should believe, or should not believe?

Let me give you an illustration . . . there are on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, on April 15, 1966 the following: "A Navy (Department) memo to Rep. PARSONS (D-Texas) inadvertently carried an internal note that confessed 'you'll note we purposely not answered the question even in a very indirect way.'"

It is not of great significance in itself, the internal note which was most certainly not noted for Congressman PARSONS's eyes is symptomatic of what is coming to be called "credibility gap." Some, like Congressman GERALD FORD (R-Michigan), have said the appellation "credibility canyon" is an accurate description of the bureaucratic approach to the dissemination of information.

A distinguished newscaster, Walter Cronkite, managing editor of "CBS Evening News" was even more explicit when he told the Daily Press Association on February 1960: ". . . the political lie has become a way of bureaucratic life. It has been by the more genteel name of 'news management.' I say here now, let's call it as-is-lying."

Mr. Cronkite said is not really new, practice of lying to the American public was publicly announced . . . and demonstrated . . . in words that anyone can hear . . . at a press conference in July at a high-ranking spokesman for an American bureaucracy . . . Mr. Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Operations. Mr. Sylvester said: "Look, if any American official is going to tell the truth, then you're stupid. Did that?—Stupid."

It is here that such an attitude on the part of spokesmen in high places in this government is causing a "credibility gap" that is undermining any efforts we might make in Viet Nam. And it undermines efforts we might make to give respect to those nations of the world who are dangerously inflationary trends as in our domestic economy.

Defense Secretary McNamara has acknowledged existence of the problem reported by the Chicago Sun-Times on May 6, 1966, the Secretary admitted, example of candor, that the reason the States is having such difficulty in dealing with this Nation's Vietnamese is that "our credibility was destroyed." At every department and bureau of the government there are myriad ex-

amples of the manipulation of newsworthy fact. Some are relatively minor, but they are infractions just the same against the people's right to honesty from their government officials.

When the Washington Post reported that there would be an excise tax cut of \$4 billion, the word was immediately spread that this was false. George Reedy, then Press Secretary to the President said "that figure bears no relationship to any decision that has been made." A few months later, Mr. Johnson asked Congress to cut excise taxes by \$3.964 billion.

When the Washington Star reported that the President would recommend a three percent average pay increase for federal workers, it was claimed this was erroneous. Yet, a short time later, the President proposed a three-percent average pay increase for federal workers.

Six days before the November 1964 election, Labor Secretary W. Willard Wirtz announced that unemployment had reached a three-year low during October and that the number of unemployed had declined by two million since January of 1961. Then, after the election, Wirtz admitted that his statement had contained invalid statistical comparisons because the figures were not seasonally adjusted. More people are always employed in October than in January and, according to seasonally adjusted statistics, the actual decrease in unemployment was not 2,000,000 but 748,000.

Most significantly, no corrections were made until after elections and this is then distortion at its worst because of the difficulty a reporter . . . or the public . . . would have in attempting to learn the correct figures and put any achievements in their proper perspective.

Another blatant case of withholding information came to light in 1965 when the Postmaster General refused to divulge the names of persons who were hired by the Post Office Department as summer employees. Only after repeated and concerted demands by many of us in the Congress did the Postmaster General become convinced that the names of public employees were indeed in the public realm.

Even the General Accounting Office has documented evidence relating to the government information problem. In testimony before a Congressional Committee in 1964, the Comptroller General stated that the GAO had found that reports on the Accelerated Public Works program had "significantly over-stated" the number of jobs estimated to be created by the projects under that program. In this case, I think the use of the word "significant" was a little weak, for the Comptroller General later stated that the estimates were overstated by 128%.

As a sidelight, and whether coincidental or deliberate after such a statement from the Comptroller General, I don't know, but there is now a strong likelihood that the "teeth" will soon be taken out of the GAO. After 45 years as the "watchdog" of the U.S. Treasury, and after countless exposures of extravagance, inefficiency and occasionally fraud in the spending of public funds, it has now been suggested that the GAO reduce both the number and the "harshness" of its future audits. Justifiably, disents have been filed by Republicans and Democrats alike to the House Government Operations Committee report which has recommended this action. For, such a subversion of the established function of the GAO could easily destroy one of the few avenues the taxpayers has to find out the undiluted facts about the operation of his government.

Now, let's examine some of the international incidents which have led to serious challenges abroad to the veracity of our government . . .

In July of 1965, a U.S. spy plane was detected in an overflight of French atomic in-

stallations. Our government denied that such flights had been made. Later, confronted with evidence, it was forced to retract the denial and apologize to General DeGaulle's government.

In late summer of 1965, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, charged that some years earlier a CIA agent had offered him a \$3.3 million bribe. This brought an immediate denial from the U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia, James D. Bell, followed within hours by an official denial from State Department spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, who said: "First, we are surprised at these statements attributed to Prime Minister Lee. With respect to the allegations of CIA involvements, we deny that allegation."

Almost immediately, Prime Minister Lee produced a letter of apology from Secretary Rusk . . . dated April 15, 1961 (four and one-half years earlier) which said, in part: "I am deeply distressed to learn that certain officials of the United States government have been found by your Government to have been engaged in improper activities in Singapore. I want you to know how much I regret that this unfortunate incident occurred to mar friendly relations between our two governments."

What kind of impression would you suppose this incident left in the other capitals of the world—Certainly not one of trust in our capacity for truth.

But, this is not all by any means. Two battalions of Marines had been sent to Da-Nang and Secretaries Rusk and McNamara said they would be used only for "local close-in security" and, in McNamara's words, would "not tangle with the Viet Cong." Yet, only two months later, a U.S. Military spokesman in Saigon said these troops would "render combat support, which includes, if necessary, fighting."

Rusk and McNamara were simply left out on the end of the limb to find their way back as best they could. And, I might add, I don't think McNamara, particularly, has found his way back yet.

Still another example of the kind of misinformation which is so deteriorating our foreign relations was reported in Look Magazine in November 1965. Eric Sevareid, relating information given him by the late Adlai Stevenson shortly before his death, said Stevenson had told him that during the Presidential campaign of 1964 U.N. Secretary-General U Thant had privately obtained agreement from North Viet Nam that they would send an emissary to talk with an American emissary in Rangoon, Burma.

However, the late Ambassador to the U.N. reportedly told Mr. Sevareid, someone in Washington had insisted that this attempt at negotiation be postponed until after the Presidential elections, and Mr. U Thant reportedly agreed. Then, when the election was over, Thant again pursued the matter because Hanoi was still willing to send its man. But, this time, Defense Secretary McNamara . . . according to Mr. Stevenson . . . flatly opposed the attempt.

The State Department at first denied the Sevareid charge, then again in an about-face, admitted its truthfulness. Remember, all of this took place during a time when the American people were repeatedly being told that this nation had explored every possibility for negotiations without any indication of interest from Hanoi.

During the third week in May of 1960, the U.S. Government belatedly acknowledged, if only implicitly, two serious incidents involving communist countries which the United States public regrettably learned of first from communist sources.

The first was the shooting of a Cuban infiltrator by a U.S. guard at Guantanamo naval base, initially reported by Cuban authorities and immediately denied by the Pentagon. Later in the week, however, the Pentagon changed its mind and came for-